

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2008

Joint Statement of Florida Democratic Delegation regarding offshore oil drilling

We, the Democratic members of the Florida delegation, stand together in our opposition to the Bush/McCain proposal to severely expand drilling for oil in the coastal waters of the State of Florida. We view it as a political gimmick that will not lower gas prices for consumers but could have real and tragic consequences for Florida's economy and natural environment. We are especially concerned that our Governor, who ran on a platform that included opposition to offshore drilling, a position stated even in his 2007 inaugural speech, has now opted to support the Bush/McCain efforts to support this gift to Big Oil.

While President Bush, Senator McCain, Big Oil, and perhaps even our Governor are willing to put Florida's vital tourism and fishing economies at risk for a small amount of oil and gas, we are *not* willing to do so. We cannot sacrifice Florida's billion-dollar tourism and fishing industries, our beaches, coastal environment and marine resources due to the Administration's wholesale failure to produce sound energy policy. Florida's hard working families have enough to contend with - the high cost of insurance, record prices at the gas pump, trying to access affordable health care and keeping up with their mortgages. A blow to tourism and our fishing industry is certainly something we cannot afford.

There is an inherent fallacy in the argument that offshore drilling would significantly lower gas prices. 68 million acres of leased federal lands and waters are currently open to drilling but are not being tapped. Over 80% of offshore oil and gas reserves are already available. In fact, since President Bush took office in 2000, the number of wells in federally-leased areas has increased exponentially, but gas prices have doubled during that same time.

Instead of calling for drilling just off the beaches of Florida, President Bush and Senator McCain should join us in support of Democrat's 'Use It or Lose It' legislation, which directs oil companies to use the 68 million already open acres before they build rigs just off our coastline. The oil companies have had every incentive to drill in these locations because they are not paying the royalties to American taxpayers as they should.

Big Oil interests have unfortunately been more important to this Administration than the concerns of our neighbors. Now all Americans are paying the price.

We urge President Bush and Senator McCain to engage in a genuine conversation with us and our neighbors about real ways to lower the price of gas, on energy conservation and new renewable technologies, and to help us in our efforts to end the massive, wasteful taxpayer subsidies to the Big Oil companies.

Kathy Castor

Phil Wind

Greg Hartung

Al B. Hall

Allen Boyd

Abbie Wassum Shuf

Ronald J. Klein

Carmine Brown

Jeff

Bill Nelson